



Spec'ing Your Taxes With Robert D. Scheper

Choosing A Trucking Company: Trust... Where Is Your Portion Of The \$15 Million?

There are many things to consider when choosing a trucking company: contracted rate of pay, type of equipment, lanes of operation, social environment, commodities shipped, customers etc. None of that is as important as the ability to trust your employer.

Initially, a good understanding of your contract is essential. Most are very similar but occasionally I come across an obscenely one sided agreement. My favorite quote is "... we (the trucking company) reserve the right to deduct any amount at any time for any reason without notice...". Not only was this company bold enough to write it down they were equally as brazen to act on it.

Sometimes, however, it makes no difference what is written in the contract. If the control-

ling shareholders are unscrupulous, then practically speaking it doesn't matter what they type up and have you sign. If they are not honorable, just and fair minded you'll still end up getting shafted (to varying degrees of absurdity of course).

Forty+ years ago there was a deep natural sense of loyalty between drivers and trucking companies. Everyone worked for "the best" and had the best drivers. Today, however, trust is a rare commodity. Each operator has to grow their own isolated limb as best they know how and pray the company doesn't saw it off while they're out there.

So how can anyone tell if a company is ethical? Take a close look at the owners, not the senior managers. It's

the owners who hire the managers who get the results they want. If the owners are individuals of character and integrity it will reflect in their choice of management and policies. There is no such thing as personal ethics and business ethics... every choice is a reflection of the person in power! Hiring someone to steal for you means you're the instigator or at least an accomplice.

A good way to judge their character is to observe their actions. Some actions are more easily judged than others. Integrity is a way of life, not an isolated incident; it continuously reflects in what we do and what we don't do. We all recognize it when we see it.

Here's an example.

On January 19th Nolan Transport (Brampton, ONT) was featured

in a press release that confirmed the success of a multi-plaintiff action against Canada Revenue Agency on behalf of Owner Operators between 1991 and 2002 (Israel Ludwig acting litigator). The settlement was reported to be about \$15 million. The amount was/is to be distributed to about 3 dozen trucking companies who participated. They, in turn, must pass on the funds to their operators (many of them past operators). The cheques Nolan issued ranged from \$400-16,000. Not exactly chump change.

The first problem is that the release only mentioned three companies that volunteered to be test subjects in the claim (Nolan Transportation, Penner International and Bison Transport). Who are the other companies?

How come nobody else has announced the windfall to their operators? In this situation, how companies act or don't act is a clear reflection of their ethical compass. Maybe some (and we don't yet know who, if any) may not wish to have their name mentioned. They may perceive the windfall as "their windfall" (contrary to what Israel Ludwig states "carriers that don't pass along the rebates could face ramifications").

This is a multi-million dollar ethics play at work. Not only are the companies responsible to forward the funds, but forward to the full amount of funds. Herein lies another black ice patch: who's to say they didn't send it all out? In the end, it all comes down to trust. CRA was adamant that operators receive the money, not the carriers. The responsibility is the trucking company's. It'll be interesting over the next few months or couple of years to find out who operated with integrity and who didn't. Some answers may have to be revealed by the Free-

dom of Information Act or by CRA audit. It's comforting to know there are still companies like Nolan Transport where you can drive with pride and assurance of integrity.

When companies trade in deception and greed the entire industry reputation suffers. Drivers don't fully participate in the companies' efforts and even find ways to stunt growth rather than expand it. But working with or even watching a company of integrity inspires us all to greater heights. We all want to see them succeed and if given a chance, quality drivers would like to work for them too. ✎

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